

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-12 ISO-00 EB-08 DOTE-00 PA-02 ICA-20
COME-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 /060 W
-----122913 190225Z /66
R 190205Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8907

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 11072

FOR OES/APT/SA; OES/APT/BMP; EB/TCA

DEPT PASS TO DOT

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELTN, TECH, JA
SUBJECT: THE HIGH-SPEED LINEAR MOTOR TRAIN MOVES AHEAD

1. CONFLUENCE OF NUMBER OF EVENTS IN PAST TWO WEEKS
HAVE CAUSED US TO FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON THE FUTURE OF
RAIL TRANSPORTATION IN JAPAN AND POSSIBLY U.S.:

--TEST RUNS HAVE BEGUN ON A SEGMENT OF THE NEW SHINKANSEN
LINE TO RUN FROM TOKYO TO AOMORI.

--JNR OFFICIALS CALLED AGAIN ON EMBASSY OFFICERS TO
REPORT THAT PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE IN EXPANDING
COOPERATION WITH FRA/AMTRAK, AND THAT A GOVERNMENTAL-LEVEL
ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE SOUGHT RATHER THAN DIRECT
JNR-AMTRAK RELATIONSHIP.

--LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD BACK
THE INSTALLATION OF A HIGH SPEED SURFACE TRAIN LINK
FOR NARITA-TOKYO-HANEDA, WITH COMPLETION SCHEDULED BY
END OF 1979.

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--EMBOFFS WERE INVITED TO VISIT JNR'S RAILWAY TECHNICAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN KUNITACHI, WHERE THEY GAINED NEW
INSIGHTS TO FUTURE OF RAIL TRANSPORT IN JAPAN.

--EMBOFF WAS INVITED TO RIDE JUNE 12 IN JAL'S HSST
EXPERIMENTAL MAGLEV LINEAR MOTOR EXPERIMENTAL CAR ON TEST

TRACK IN KAWASAKI.

2. FROM THE JNR STAFF WE RECEIVED CONFIRMATION THAT NATIONAL RAILWAY PASSENGER FARES WILL BE INCREASED ACROSS THE BOARD IN OCTOBER. JNR RECOGNIZES THE PRICE ELASTICITY OF THE FARE STRUCTURE RESULTS IN DECREASED PASSENGER TRAFFIC WHEN FARES ARE INCREASED, BUT NET REVENUES ARE STILL EXPECTED TO BE HIGHER.

3. WE LEARNED FROM JNR THAT IT HAD EXPECTED TO SERVE NARITA AIRPORT WITH A NEW SHINKANSEN LINE FROM AIRPORT TO TOKYO STATION, BUT RESPONSIBILITY FOR AIRPORT GROUND TRANSPORT WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM JNR BY GOJ AND AS RESULT JAPAN AIR LINES BEGAN DEVELOPMENT OF MAGLEV LINEAR MOTOR TRAIN TO RUN AT MAXIMUM SPEED OF 300 KPH ON A NARITA-TOKYO-HANEDA LINE, EVEN THOUGH JNR WAS DEVELOPING SIMILAR EQUIPMENT TO RUN AT 500 KPH AS ULTIMATE REPLACEMENT FOR EXISTING SHINKANSEN.

4. JNR HAD NOT ACQUIRED RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR NARITA LINK AND IN RETROSPECT IT WOULD HAVE FOUND ITSELF IN SERIOUS TROUBLE IN TRYING TO BUILD A NEW RAIL LINE TO NARITA. CONVERSELY, JAL PLANS TO INSTALL OVERHEAD TRACK FOR NARITA MAGLEV TRAIN ON RIGHT-OF-WAY USED FOR AUTO EXPRESSWAY INTO TOKYO.

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5. COMPETITION BETWEEN JAL AND JNR IN MAGLEV DEVELOPMENT IS MOST UNUSUAL, SINCE ORDINARILY GOJ WOULD FORCE THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS TO COOPERATE. JNR TOLD US THAT JAL ACQUIRED MOST OF ITS MAGLEV TECHNOLOGY FROM FRG AND FRANCE, WHILE JNR TECHNOLOGY IS INDIGENOUS. SHOT IN ARM FOR PROCEEDING WITH JAL NARITA LINK CAME WITH ANNOUNCEMENT THAT LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY WAS SUPPORTING THIS INSTALLATION. TIMETABLE OF COMPLETION BY 1979 IS COMPLETELY UNREASONABLE. BOTH JNR AND JAL SENIOR ENGINEERS HAVE TOLD US THAT IT WOULD TAKE THREE YEARS MINIMUM TO COMPLETE R&D, MANUFACTURE CARS, AND BUILD TRACK AND STATION PLATFORMS.

6. EVEN THOUGH THERE IS HARD-NOSED COMPETITION BETWEEN JNR AND JAL ON MAGLEV DEVELOPMENT, THIS DOES NOT EXTEND TO RELATIONS BETWEEN JNR AND PRIVATE RAILROADS. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION, WE WERE TOLD THAT THE JNR RESEARCH INSTITUTE PROVIDES TECHNOLOGY TO THE PRIVATE RAILROADS SINCE THE LATTER DO NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO PERFORM THEIR OWN R&D.

7. ON JUNE 12, THE CANADIAN AND AMERICAN SCIENCE

COUNSELORS WERE INVITED TO BE PASSENGERS ON JAL'S
HSST-02 MANNED MAGLEV TEST VEHICLE. THE RIDE WAS
FRANKLY EXCITING, ESSENTIALLY NOISELESS, AND VERY
COMFORTABLE, ALTHOUGH MAXIMUM SPEED OF ONLY 40 KPH
WAS PERMITTED WITH 6 PASSENGERS AND CREWMAN ABOARD.
TEST TRACK OF 1.3 KM ALSO LIMITED DURATION OF RIDE.
UNMANNED TEST OF VEHICLE WAS DEMONSTRATED AT 200 KPH.
IN BURST OF AIRLINE SHOWMANSHIP, PASSENGERS WERE USHERED
ABOARD BY JAL STEWARDESS AND WERE GIVEN BOARDING PASSES
CERTIFYING THAT THEY HAD FLOWN AT ALTITUDE OF 10

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ACTION OES-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8908

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MILLIMETERS. THE DEMONSTRATION COULD BE CONSIDERED ONLY
AS MOST IMPRESSIVE, ALTHOUGH THERE APPEARED TO BE A
GENERAL FEELING OF DISBELIEF BY SOME OBSERVERS THAT THE
VEHICLE COULD BE PROPELLED WITHOUT WHEELS. TECHNICAL
SPECS ON TEST VEHICLE ARE AVAILABLE IN EMBASSY AND MORE
DETAILS ON PRELIMINARY DESIGN OF FULL SIZED TRAIN CAN
BE FOUND IN JANUARY 1978 ISSUE OF ICAO BULLETIN, WHICH
CONTAINS INTERESTING ARTICLE ON TYPE OF SERVICE EXPECTED
FROM TRAIN. MANSFIELD

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